

Epistle from the AVP/PAV International Gathering, in Antigua, October 2 to 8, 2011

To all friends of AVP/PAV and lovers of peace and nonviolence everywhere:

We send our loving greetings and news from the beautiful city of Antigua, Guatemala.

We are gathered in one of the most beautiful locations in an incredibly beautiful country. This is dwarfed, however, by the beauty in the faces, smiles, and new friendships of the participants.

Nearly 100 participants from 22 countries have gathered in mutual endeavor, support, exploration, and calling for 6 productive days. Our sisters and brothers come from Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, Nederland, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Peru, Rwanda, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States (and Virgin Islands).

The IG planning group had selected Central America as the venue with the hope and intention of facilitating an introduction, coalescing, and collaboration of Latin American PAV facilitators and programs. This intention was fulfilled and surpassed, as our Central and Southern American sisters and brothers joined to define their needs and dreams and plans for the future of their regions.

While the many Latin Americans, through their self-directed intentional process, made their new friendships clearly visible, all regions had the joy of meeting brother and sister facilitators from their own regions as well.

These new friendships, partnerships and relationships were extended to all regions and sealed through shared meals, walks and joy in evenings of song and dance.

The Coordinating Committee's initial vision for the Gathering was transformed through the power of the collective wisdom of the group, compassionate attention to the sense of the meeting and the needs of the newly forming regional groups.

AVP-International and attendees learned of the tremendous works of other dedicated AVP/PAV and trauma facilitators from around the world. Attendees were awed and inspired by the tales they heard, many of which had not been known outside the region.

With so many talented and skilled facilitators together, we wanted to understand our knowledge of AVP workshops, which we call care and love. Out of a workshop on collective AVP/PAV wisdom came the impetus to describe the essential elements of an AVP/PAV workshop - or as the Latin American group described it - the skeleton from which the content hangs. The two language groups each built consensus on these essential elements, as the desire to have a clear description of an AVP/PAV workshop skeleton became a solid focus that all facilitators wanted. The two working groups came together through three plenary sessions and continued the consensus process, finally agreeing upon workshop session's duration, evaluation, transforming power, and many more. We are now drawn together by the joy of our facilitator time together.

We have participated in a wonderful variety of groups, sessions, and creative activities. We have shared each other's company, wisdom, experience and innovations.

Vivid images of connections and community will remain with us. The breadth and value of projects undertaken by us all has been evident. This has all been a cause for celebration.

We have found our community of loving facilitators to be a fellowship of smaller communities and groups, each arising from a common calling, each enhanced by listening to and respecting others.

We have been reminded of the value of our connections: tender conversations at meals and in corridors; deep connectedness in small groups and in plenary; our complex relationships with AVP history,

traditions and the wider AVP/PAV family; and our shared calling for a nonviolent world.

We have worked with openness and commitment to discern the next stages of our development, following and building upon the work of previous Gatherings. We are now resolved to formalize the legal status of our joint endeavors and to begin to set forth processes of discernment, decision making and action, and to work to increase our resources. We have, with the plenary approval of the proposed officer slate and the recommendations of the nominating committee, continued our commitment to ever greater diversity in our representative structure, paying attention to gender, regions, nationality and other considerations. Many participants have volunteered for service to AVP-I as officers and through committee work. The assistance of others not in attendance, is gratefully appreciated.

We return to our communities, local work and daily lives strengthened by our experiences here.

Signed in and on behalf of the 2011 AVP International Gathering,

Santiago Antigua,
Guatemala, October 7, 2011

John Michaelis, Clerk